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Central Intelligence Agency



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## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Japan and the International Moratorium on Whaling

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## Overview

Japan, along with the Soviet Union and Norway, continues to oppose the International Whaling Commission (IWC) ban on commercial whaling after 1985. Despite its small size, the Japanese whaling industry enjoys considerable public support and sympathy. Nonetheless, Tokyo has been seeking a compromise which would allow subsistence whaling after the IWC ban goes into effect. This formula would probably satisfy domestic whaling interests.

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The United States' threat to reduce Japan's fishing quotas in US waters if Japan defies the ban has evoked a strong emotional response in Japan. We believe Tokyo is not willing to sacrifice its \$500 million fish trade with the United States to save its \$50 million whaling industry. The issue, however, could become a major irritant in US-Japan relations.

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This paper was done at the request of the Japan Desk, Department of State, by [redacted] Japan Branch, Northeast Asia Division, Office of East Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Japan Branch, Northeast Asia Division, OEA; [redacted]

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### The Whaling Industry in Japan

One of nine countries still engaged in commercial whaling, Japan accounts for 39 percent of the world's annual whaling catch. Although the Japanese do derive more than 50 percent of their protein from marine products, the once important whale meat, now makes up less than 1 percent of their diet. [ ]

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The Japanese have hunted whales primarily as a source of food for hundreds of years. IWC regulations, however, have reduced the annual catch to 15,000-20,000 tons, a far cry from the 300,000 ton annual catches of the early 1960s. Domestic production of whale meat in 1981 was 19,200 tons; Japan imported another 25,400 tons. According to an industry estimate, potential demand for whale meat in Japan is 200,000 tons annually. Whale meat in Japan has thus become more expensive and is treated as a delicacy. [ ]

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With reductions in IWC quotas, Japan's whaling industry, which boasted more than a million workers two decades ago, has dwindled to about 50,000 persons. About 1,300 are actually engaged in whaling operations. Japan has only one whaling fleet left, compared with ten during the industry's heyday. [ ]

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Despite its relative economic insignificance, Japan's whaling industry wields considerable influence in the Diet through the lobbying efforts and political connections of the Japan Whaling Association. In large part because of hundreds of years of whaling tradition, the industry enjoys wide popular support in Japan as well. [ ]

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### Japan and the IWC

Japan filed an objection to the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling after 1985 soon after the Commission announced its decision at the annual meeting in July 1982. The Soviet Union, Norway, and Peru also lodged protests, but Peru recently withdrew its objection in response to international pressure. Because the IWC has no enforcement powers, a nation protesting an IWC decision could continue to whale until the IWC acted upon its objection. The Commission took no action on Japan's protest at this year's meeting because Japan had not yet presented its evidence in support of its objections. We expect the issue will be addressed at the annual meeting in 1984, however. [ ]

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Information from a variety of sources leads us to believe that the Japanese have been in touch with other whaling nations such as Norway to coordinate positions in the IWC. The Japanese, however, appear to be distancing themselves from the Soviets on the whaling issue, even though together the two countries account

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for over 70 percent of the annual whaling catch. We believe Japan is trying to draw a line between the Soviets, who whale for commercial reasons, and the Japanese industry, which is more a nationally endorsed hobby. [redacted] 25X1

25X1 Despite its dispute with the IWC over the whaling ban, Japan continues to support the current programs of the Commission to conserve catches based on scientific data and to improve methods of hunting whales, such as the use of explosive harpoons. At this year's IWC meeting, held in Brighton, England, 18-23 July, the Japanese expressed general satisfaction with the catch levels set for the 1984 whaling season which begins this fall. The IWC allocated to Japan the right to harvest 3,027 minke whales in the Southern Hemisphere, down slightly from the quota in 1983 of 3,224. The Commission also gave Japan quotas of 421 minke whales in the Okhotsk Sea and the Northwest Pacific and 536 Bryde's whales in the Northwest Pacific, about the same levels as last year. [redacted] 25X1

Japan is convinced that whaling is basically a resource management problem and that harvesting should continue as long as the resource is increasing. It questions various claims that certain species of whales, such as minke and sperm, are endangered and points to a recent scientific study by the IWC which calculated that the stock of minke whales in the Southern Hemisphere increased 100,000 over the past year to an estimated 400,000. [redacted] 25X1

The Japanese accuse the IWC of no longer following its 1946 charter to promote commercial whaling while preserving whale resources. They question the objectivity of the IWC, which they say now represents primarily antiwhaling interests. They accuse former whaling nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom of staying on in the Commission only to boost the anti-whaling vote. [redacted] 25X1

#### Japan and the United States

The Japanese were angered and frustrated by the United States' linkage of bilateral fishing quotas to Japan's position on the IWC whaling ban. They point out that they had a right to protest the ban under IWC regulations. They deny that their protest means they will defy the ban and quit the IWC. Tokyo argues that they have not only cooperated with IWC policies to conserve whale stocks and improve whaling methods, but have also supported US positions at the IWC, such as allowing Eskimos to hunt bowhead whales, which are considered to be an endangered species. [redacted]

Tokyo officials are concerned that strong and highly

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publicized US pressure on Japan to drop its protest will only serve to heighten the political and emotional overtones of the issue in Japan and harden public opinion. They believe such an atmosphere will only make it more difficult to give ground to the IWC for fear of the domestic backlash. [redacted]

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### Tokyo's Strategy

We believe Tokyo would prefer not to implement its threat to defy the IWC ban on whaling and withdraw from the Commission. They are seeking every avenue of compromise before the 1985 deadline. According to Embassy reporting, Tokyo would like to see an exception offered by the IWC allowing "subsistence" whaling rights such as the Eskimos have enjoyed along US coastal waters. Another option might be to allow whaling near Antarctica for research purposes. Such compromise proposals have been attacked, however, by conservationists. [redacted]

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The issue of whaling in Japan involves a mixture of national pride, a traditional occupation for thousands of workers, cherished cultural values, powerful interest groups, and popular sympathy for the whalers' cause. Nonetheless, we believe Tokyo would not sacrifice Japan's \$500 million fishing trade with the United States for the \$50 million whaling industry. Aside from US economic leverage, postwar Japanese governments have always enforced the letter of the law imposed by international organizations such as GATT and the IMF. [redacted]

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The impact on the bilateral relationship will depend in large measure on the intensity of public US pressure on Tokyo.

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To prevent such a development, Tokyo will continue to seek every opportunity to explain its position to the United States, seek to remove linkage between whaling and fishing quotas in US waters, and request time to work out a solution with the IWC or direct US support for a compromise with the Commission. [redacted]

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We believe Tokyo would be more than willing to grasp at any positive measure offering a possible way out of its dilemma, such as supporting subsistence level coastal whaling, such as that given by the United States to the Eskimos in Alaska, further scientific study of whale resources, or any economic study of the effect of the ban on the domestic whaling industry. [redacted]

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